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## Making Our Time Together Count: How to Use Workshops to Increase Well-Being through Connection

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# Making Our Time Together Count: How to Use Workshops to Increase Well-Being through Connection

## Abstract

This Capstone explores how well-being can be increased through creating conditions for connection in workshop experiences. It begins with an overview of workshops followed by a literature review of the general field of positive psychology and two specific elements of social connection: belonging and mattering as well as short-term positive connections. It details these areas as well as their corresponding benefits for well-being both generally and inside of workshops, specifically. Finally, the Appendix: Fostering Connection in Workshops to Increase Well-Being, outlines research-based suggestions workshop facilitators can use to put this information into action. These resources are provided with the intention of fostering well-being in workshops through creating opportunities for participants to connect in the moment as well as arming participants with tools to use in their own workshops and lives. This translation of research into practical suggestions for workshop facilitators should elevate facilitators' practice by both giving them new ideas to incorporate as well as by backing their existing practices with research.

## Keywords

connection, belonging, mattering, high quality connection, positivity resonance, psychological safety, flourishing, workshop, facilitation, adult education

## Disciplines

Industrial and Organizational Psychology | Other Psychology | Personality and Social Contexts | Psychology | Social Psychology

Making Our Time Together Count: How to Use Workshops to Increase Well-Being through  
Connection

Sydney Kastner

University of Pennsylvania

A Capstone Project Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Applied Positive Psychology

Advisor: Jan Stanley

August 1, 2019

Making Our Time Together Count: How to Use Workshops to Increase Well-Being through  
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## Introduction

Social connection is a ubiquitous and important part of the human experience (Fredrickson, 2013a). Research in positive psychology has established that interactions and social connections can improve well-being (e.g., Dutton, 2003; Fredrickson, 2013a). We can harness the power of the boosts in well-being that come from connection. **This Capstone focuses on how to apply well-being research on social connection to workshop settings in order to promote well-being for participants.** Specifically, the goals of this Capstone are to: (1) consolidate the relevant research on social connection, (2) relate that research to workshops, and (3) bridge the gap between research and practice by making research-based suggestions for workshop facilitators.

To accomplish these goals, I first provide background on workshops, including the existing research about them and my connection to them. Then, I will review the goals of this work and provide a literature review starting with gaps in research, an overview of positive psychology more generally, and elaborating on literature related to social connection, specifically. You will see a definition of overall social connection and some of its elements: belonging, mattering, and short-term positive connections. Within each of these sections, I explain the benefits of each type of social connection and how those benefits relate to well-being in general as well as to the workshop context specifically. The Capstone ends with Appendix A: Fostering Connection in Workshops to Increase Well-Being. This appendix details practical, research-based suggestions for workshop facilitators to create connection-rich environments thus opportunities for participants to flourish. Though these suggestions are catered to the workshop setting, they can be adapted to other settings or contexts.

My experiences as an educator, an adult learning facilitator, and a candidate for a Master's in Applied Positive Psychology, combined with my passion for connection and strengths in creativity, synthesis, and application of research make me uniquely qualified to investigate this area and put forward suggestions to increase connection through workshops.

These suggestions are designed to create conditions that facilitate connection and increase the well-being of participants. This Capstone shows how workshops, when designed to intentionally encourage connections, can be used to improve well-being. The suggestions can also create ripple effects for well-being when facilitators describe how the workshop activities increase opportunities for connection and how those connections improve well-being. Participants can use the suggested techniques they experience or the frameworks behind them moving forward in other circumstances, increasing the likelihood that they will encourage connections and flourishing in other situations that they facilitate.

### **Overview of Workshops**

#### **Defining Workshops**

This research specifically focuses on a type of gathering: a “workshop,” which I define here, based on my experiences, as a gathering of two or more adults and a facilitator for a specific purpose. The purpose of a workshop is typically to learn how to apply a new skill, content, or framework, and these learnings are often related to participants' professions or an outside skill. Unlike classes or meetings, they are interactive. Participants do not passively listen or observe. Workshop participants do not need to have preexisting relationships, nor do they need to reconvene after the workshop ends. This means that participants could be partners, teams, or individuals. Workshop lengths range from hours to a few days to a week.



**Examples of Workshops**

Workshops are common in the fields of education and medicine. An example of an educational workshop is teacher professional development in which the end goal is increased student learning (Guskey, 2002). Teachers attend professional development workshops to improve their practices or change their attitudes or beliefs (Griffin, 1983). The ultimate goal of these shifts is for them to translate into improved instructional practice, and therefore student learning. In the medical field, continuing education workshops seek to improve patient outcomes through improving the medical professionals' practice by developing their skills or mindsets (Forsetlund, et al., 2009).

Workshops are also common in many other fields. In fact, most professions, political parties, academic fields, and affinity or fan groups have local, regional, national, and international conferences in which workshop participants build on their existing knowledge and develop new and relevant skills.

**My Connection to Workshops**

I have facilitated countless workshops. Developing, differentiating, and executing learning experiences brings me immense joy. As an elementary school educator, I fell in love with facilitating learning for others. I facilitated classroom sessions for my students, professional development workshops for teachers, and values based leadership development workshops for first-year educators. For the last three years, I have facilitated a professional development workshop for over 500 participants. This workshop focuses on teaching entrepreneurial mindsets and skills to educational entrepreneurs. The end goal is to improve participants' impact on educational equity in their communities. This workshop is a three-day, in-person session that is part of a 6-month fellowship. The participants do not know each other before they attend the

workshop. Because the participants do not live in the same cities, their continued connection is not guaranteed. Therefore, it is the perfect example of a workshop.

The participants have consistently reported experiencing joy, connection, belonging, and safety during this workshop experience. This feedback sparked my interest in relating positive psychology to my work. I wanted to capture, study, and re-create the positive atmosphere of these events. I wanted to define their impact using research so that I could both explain it and help other people facilitate similar experiences. The focus of this Capstone, increasing the likelihood of well-being through connection of participants in workshops, is the first step in my journey of improving in-person experiences to ensure higher levels of well-being, regardless of the purpose of the gathering.

### **A Review of the Literature**

Below is an introduction to positive psychology followed by a summary of multiple elements of social connection that highlights the research on and benefits of each element discussed. Positive psychology anchors and is interwoven throughout this Capstone, which focuses on using well-being research, specifically about elements of social connection, to encourage flourishing at workshops. One of the founders of positive psychology, Christopher Peterson, summarized the field in the four words, “Other people matter. Period” (Park, Oates, & Schwarzer, 2013, p. 2). This showcases his strong belief that positive relationships are necessary foundations for a flourishing life (Park et al., 2013).

Appendix A that follows contains integrated research on each element along with aligned, practical suggestions for how workshop facilitators can use research to increase the probability of flourishing among workshop participants. The suggestions focus on techniques for facilitators to prepare for, structure, and facilitate workshops in order to increase flourishing

among participants. The suggestions are relatively quick and simple. They are designed to not detract from the primary goals of the workshops. These suggestions can be added to any workshop and can supplement any given goal or context because they are both (1) generally applicable and (2) modifiable based on the needs of the participants and the context of the workshop. None of the suggestions have been researched themselves in isolation; rather, they are all suggestions based on findings in one or more study within a different context. Though this does not fill the gap in research on these types of gatherings, it does begin to bridge the gap between research and practice.

### **Gaps in Research**

There are already rich resources that describe how to best bring groups of people together to maximize the meaning of gatherings and what is accomplished within them (e.g. Parker, 2018). There is also ample research on the benefits of social connection. There is a gap between research on well-being and practice, particularly in the workplace and within adult education (Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Rousseau, 2007). The existing research focuses on workplaces more broadly. None of the literature addresses practical ways to promote well-being in a workshop setting, specifically.

This work builds on the existing research and fills gaps by (1) reviewing the literature on the definition and benefits of connection in terms of belonging and mattering as well as short-term positive connections and (2) recommending practical, research-based strategies to promote connection at workshops. It synthesizes research on positive psychology, adult education, and organizational psychology. Much of the organizational research discussed here addresses teamwork in the workplace, so it assumes that subjects frequently interact. Despite this feature, which is distinct from workshops that are typically shorter than the span of how long people tend

to work together in a workplace, this Capstone takes the general principles from those studies and applies them to the workshop context.

Because workshops are common and people can connect with one another in them, ensuring workshop facilitators can access suggestions about increasing the likelihood of connection can both supplement the workshop's primary objective and encourage participants to implement similar connection strategies outside of the workshop.

### **A Note about Inclusivity**

This work is primarily focused on bridging gaps between psychological research on connection and workshop facilitation. However, there are many other areas of lived experiences, research, and theory that could also be considered when facilitators plan workshops. Though this work touches briefly on social identity theory, the vast array of lived experiences of people with marginalized identities are not fully represented in the research or in this consolidation. I intend to enrich future versions of this work with other ideologies outside of the white dominant culture structure.

One concrete example of this is expanding the suggestions for connection from just connection to other people in the space to connection to ancestors, culture, or physical space. This could include land acknowledgements by facilitators, a strategy that acknowledges the indigenous people who lived on the land in which a workshop happens by calling their memory into the space (Shahzad, 2017).

I am in the beginning of my journey of expanding my familiarity with theories that have their basis in indigenous and other marginalized cultures that are not as present in academic research, so I will seek advice from facilitators with areas of expertise outside of my own and outside of psychology. I hope that people with a wide variety of lived experience and familiarity

with other theories will endow this work with culturally relevant contexts and suggestions so that we can work together create a more holistic collection of suggestions that recognizes a more broad range of experiences.

### **Positive Psychology**

The concepts addressed below: social connection, belonging, mattering, high quality connections, and positivity resonance, come from the field of positive psychology. Positive psychology is the study of what makes humans function optimally at the individual, group, and institutional levels (Gable & Haidt, 2005). The founder of positive psychology, Martin Seligman (2011), calls this optimum functioning *flourishing*. The field was built on the underlying assumption that people want to live meaningful lives and enhance their everyday experiences (Donaldson, Dollet, & Rao, 2015). Although there are self-help books, frameworks, and suggestions that address many of the topics positive psychology addresses, positive psychology differs from self-help in that it is empirically tested.

Positive psychology is a relatively new field that Seligman set out as one of his initiatives as president in his 1999 American Psychological Association Presidential Address. He called for a turn toward positive psychology, where the focus would move from addressing mental illness and deficits toward building strengths and surpluses (Fowler, Seligman, & Koocher, 1999). Before Seligman introduced positive psychology in 1999, psychology focused on understanding psychological maladies or distresses (Seligman, 2011). It addressed pathologies rather than the everyday functioning of people without pathologies or those who were thriving.

One metaphor that illustrates this change is a number line. Before the introduction of positive psychology, psychology was centered on learning how to move people from an existence characterized by negative numbers to a neutral point. In contrast, positive psychology

examines how to move people from a neutral point toward positive numbers (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Other fields study a more broad range of functioning, but before the introduction of positive psychology, the field of psychology had not (Sheldon & King, 2001). Therefore, rather than occupying its own field, positive psychology is an expansion of the field of psychology. It is a turn toward encompassing a more holistic human experience.

**Frameworks of positive psychology.** There are many frameworks for what comprises a life well lived. Seligman (2011) explains through his “PERMA” model that there are five elements that compose well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. These are the building blocks to well-being because (1) they are strongly correlated with measures of subjective well-being; (2) many people pursue them for their own sake rather than only receiving them as a byproduct; (3) they lead to specific interventions to build well-being; and (4) each can be measured on its own (Seligman, 2018). PERMA, however, is not exhaustive of all building blocks of well-being because there are other elements that could be included like vitality, health, and responsibility (Seligman, 2018). These building blocks are vehicles toward well-being rather than just measures of well-being.

Other psychologists also have frameworks and models for well-being. For example, psychologist Isaac Prilleltensky (2016), has a model called “ICOPPE” which breaks down well-being into interpersonal, communal, occupational, physical, psychological, and economic. Unlike PERMA, these are the types of well-being rather than its building blocks. Happiness and well-being are multifaceted. Because happiness is not caused by just one thing, it cannot be measured easily (E. Diener, personal communication, October 6, 2018). Rather, well-being is complex. Because of this complexity, positive psychology practitioners encourage interventions that increase elements of well-being as well as measurements of well-being itself.

**The importance of positive psychology.** The expansion of psychology to include more positive elements has shifted the balance of the research done within the field. Rather than focusing only on mental illness, there is more of a focus on what makes people thrive (Pawelski, 2016; Gable & Haidt, 2005). This shift has steadily increased the amount of research conducted on topics of well-being and a life worth living within the field of psychology (Donaldson, Dollwet, & Rao, 2015). Publications related to positive psychology in organizational, educational, and health psychology have increased (Donaldson & Ko, 2010; Froh, Huebner, Youssef, & Conte, 2011; Schmidt, Raque-Bogdan, Piontkowski, & Schaefer, 2011). This uptick has informed the work that many professionals do, both inside and outside the field of psychology (Pawelski, 2016). Governments and schools worldwide have implemented ideas from positive psychology (Vella-Brodrick, 2014). The swing towards the positive has caused professionals, including psychotherapists, educators, attorneys, and physicians, to elevate their work through incorporating findings from positive psychology (Pawelski, 2016). The suggestions put forth here should allow workshop facilitators to incorporate positive psychology into their work as well.

Worldwide studies of people show that most people self-report that they are at least moderately happy (Myers, 2000). This highlights the importance of psychology addressing a life well lived for people who feel neutral or happy but are not necessarily seeking to alleviate pathologies. In addition to being sought for its own sake, high levels of well-being, satisfaction with life, and happiness are associated with important improvements in elements of life such as improved physical health, work life, relationships, and other successful outcomes (Diener, et al., 2017; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Given the benefits of well-being and positive psychology's status as a new branch of psychology, it is imperative for positive psychology

practitioners to share their findings about the drivers of well-being so that the results are easily accessible. Social connection is one of those drivers, and this Capstone seeks to translate the findings of positive psychology research into practice in a meaningful way using research on social connection.

### **Social Connection: Belonging and Mattering**

Connection relates to many elements of both the PERMA and ICOPPE models of well-being. As discussed below, connection can bring positive emotions and engagement; is necessary for positive relationships; is associated with meaning; and is useful to increase the effects of achievement, engagement, and positive emotions. Connecting to others is necessary for interpersonal and communal well-being and improves occupational and psychological well-being.

Connection with other people is an established cornerstone of psychological health because people have a fundamental need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary (1995), however, define this need for belonging as the need to both create and maintain enduring attachments to people. The context of workshops discussed here does not, by definition, lead to the maintenance of enduring attachments because workshop participants are sometimes meeting for the first time and do not always have structures built in to continue their connections. However, connections can still form and affect well-being. In fact, groups that have a specified end, like workshop groups, have been found to frequently resist the breaking of their newfound bonds and show appreciation of those connections through expressing disappointment at the end of an experience and discussing planning group reunions (Lacoursiere, 1980). Even without the repeated connections of a longer term relationship or set of group experiences, people can nonetheless create connections that have immediate and lasting effects on their well-



being (Dutton, 2014; Fredrickson, 2013a). The specific pieces of social connection discussed in this Capstone are: (1) belonging and mattering and (2) short-term positive connections. The sections below describe the definition of these elements and their benefits. Appendix A then sets out suggestions for facilitators of workshops to increase well-being based on research on these types of social connection.

**Defining belonging and mattering.** Humans have a drive to feel like they belong with other people (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This belonging, or a sense of enjoying positive relationships, is an important driver of meaning (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Smith, 2017). Belonging has been found to register in the brain. According to psychologists Dominic Packer and Jay J. Van Bavel (2015), the amygdala, the part of the brain that processes a fight-or-flight response during a threat, is one part of the brain that processes belonging. Their research shows that it lights up more when viewing someone who has been identified as in the same social group, even if the grouping was recent and arbitrary. This is because people who have been identified as part of the same group quickly become valuable. People get satisfaction from their collective identities, and being part of a group to which one strongly identifies is associated with well-being (Haidt, Seder, & Kesebir, 2008). The fact that belonging registers in the brain is especially powerful for workshops because their groupings can be arbitrary and their experiences are typically shorter.

Mattering and belonging are closely related. Feelings of belonging must exist in order to foster feelings of mattering, and feelings of mattering may increase feelings of belonging (France & Finney, 2009). The term mattering was originally defined as feeling like one is the recipient of someone else's attention, that one is important to that person, and that one is needed by that person for something (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). A more current definition is feeling like

one adds value and is valued (Prilleltensky, 2016). This clarifies its difference from belonging because belonging to a group does not necessarily entail feeling valued or adding value; belonging is not enough for mattering (France & Finney, 2009). Feeling valued requires other people to acknowledge your worth (Prilleltensky, 2016).

One type of belonging or mattering that is particularly important for workshops is *mere belonging*. Mere belonging is what happens through even a small cue of social connection to a group or individual (Walton, Cohen, Cwir, & Spencer, 2012). This type of belonging can be a very small, chance, connection with someone one does not know. Walton et al. (2012) found that the mere sense of social connectedness that happens when people learn that they share a birthday or incidental preferences increased people's motivation to achieve in the domain in which they were working. The participants in the study showed signs of having adopted other, unfamiliar people's goals because of a small social connection of which they were informed. Mere belonging is a prime construct to utilize in workshops because of the short and relatively easy and straightforward nature of creating it.

**Benefits of belonging and mattering and risks of their lack.** Connection through mattering and belonging has been shown to have positive effects on well-being in areas such as physical health, motivation, positive affect, and creation of a feeling of community (e.g. Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Langston, 1994; Blatt & Camden, 2007). In addition to health, social support reduces current stressors and protects people from future stressors (Gable & Gosnell, 2011). The absence of connection, as seen in loneliness and isolation, comes with its own risks to both well-being and physical health (e.g. Berkman & Syme, 1979; Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996; Gable & Gosnell, 2011). Intentionally structuring workshops so that they can increase the

probability of connection through mattering and belonging is important because, based on the research discussed below, such workshops can benefit physical and psychological well-being.

***Physical health benefits of social connection.*** Higher levels of social integration are associated with a lower risk of health risks like inflammation, hypertension, and obesity (Yang, Boen, Geren, Schorpp, & Harris, 2016). Strong social relationships are also associated with higher survival rates (Holt-Lunstead, Smith, & Layton, 2010). Strong social relationships strengthen the immune system, extend the lifespan, speed recovery from surgery, and reduce the risks of both depression and anxiety disorders (Haidt, 2006).

***Physical health risks of social isolation.*** While relationships can positively affect well-being and physical health, a lack of relationships can also negatively affect them. Social isolation substantially increases mortality rate (Berkman & Syme, 1979). A lack of social ties is associated with poorer functioning cardiovascular, immune, and endocrine systems (Uchino et al., 1996). There is even evidence that when orphanages used to separate babies based on the fear of germs, more separated infants died than non-separated infants who were living in dirtier conditions because of the separated infants' lack of social contact (Haidt, 2006). Though these examples are extreme, the evident risk of isolation further strengthens the argument for increasing social connection through workshops.

***Motivation.*** Research on connection in schools has found that students who feel socially connected to their classmates and teachers exhibit more motivation in school, even months and years after the measurements were taken (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). This research points to the possibility that intentionally facilitating connections between learners as well as with facilitators may help the participants feel motivated both during the workshop and in the future.

***Feeling of community.*** Positive interactions that involve connection in terms of inclusion, a feeling of belonging, sharing emotions, and feeling of mutual benefit foster a sense of community between people (Blatt & Camden, 2007). A sense of community is a sense that people belong, that they are important, that they have a shared emotional connection, and that, should they commit to one another, their needs will be met (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In an atmosphere that feels communal, people keep their individuality and differences while also experiencing togetherness (Blatt & Camden, 2007). People in a community do not have to share all of their identities and can belong to multiple different communities (Brodsky & Marx, 2001). When people feel a sense of community, they are more likely to make decisions aligned with organizational values and norms and to act on the organization's behalf (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Blatt & Camden, 2007). A sense of community allows people to feel like they belong together, which lets them internalize the goals and objectives of the organization and feel more committed to them (Blatt & Camden, 2007). This is particularly beneficial for a workshop experience because the experience is short, so more quickly committing to internalizing goals can be beneficial for making progress quickly.

### **Social Connection: Short-Term Positive Connections**

**Defining short-term positive connections.** There are ways to create connection in short, episodic interactions. Psychologists have different terminology for these events as well as their components, but they agree that they have a high potential for improving well-being. This review of the literature on connection draws from two important ideas in psychological research: psychologist Jane Dutton's (2003) *high quality connections* and psychologist Barbara Fredrickson's (2013a) *micro moments of love* or *positivity resonance*. Though these concepts are distinct, they share some similar qualities. This Capstone refers to an overall concept of *short-*

*term positive connections* (STPCs), which draws on both high quality connections and love/positivity resonance because their definitional differences are not significant enough to be separated here. The way HQCs and positivity resonance/love are fostered and experienced and their benefits for well-being have enough overlap that teasing them out would not be beneficial, so they are referred to as STPCs in this Capstone.

High quality connections (HQCs) are short-term interactions between two people in which both people are actively engaged and feel positive regard (Dutton, 2003). According to psychologists John Paul Stephens, Emily Heaphy, and Jane Dutton (2011), HQCs induce feelings of vitality, and both people involved feel like they are cared for. They have found that HQCs have more capacity to carry emotions than other connections. Therefore, HQCs help people withstand strain in their interactions. These connections can happen anywhere, at any time, and with any person (Stephens et al., 2011).

Psychologist Barbara Fredrickson (2013) defines similar moments as micro moments of love or positivity resonance. She defines these brief interactions as having three specific qualities: shared positive emotions or affect, mutual care, and biobehavioral synchrony. She explains that these moments can happen every day and with any person as long as the interactions have these three qualities.

**Similarities and differences between HQC and love/positivity resonance.** Neither HQCs nor positivity resonance require the people involved to have a preexisting relationship in order to occur (Dutton, 2003; Major, Nguyen, Lundberg, & Fredrickson, 2018). This highlights the daily potential for these STPCs because they can be between anyone in the right conditions. Additionally, during both HQCs and positivity resonance, the people involved have a positive experience. Positivity resonance research describes it as shared positive affect or emotion, and

the literature on both concepts describes a positive subjective experience as a key ingredient (Fredrickson, 2013a; Dutton, 2003).

Exhibiting presence makes both HQCs and positivity resonance more likely to occur. Frederickson (2013a) lists the ways people can make positivity resonance occur more often: by paying attention, making eye contact, and, when appropriate, touching the person who is being engaged. Similarly, *respectful engagement* is a pathway to HQCs (Dutton, 2003). Dutton (2003) explains psychological presence as an important element of respectful engagement. She explains that this can happen through body language, being physically and emotionally available, and reducing distractions. Though not identical concepts, both HQCs and positivity resonance require similar elements of presence.

Though these two types of STPCs are similar, they also have key differences. Positivity resonance entails a biobehavioral synchrony, a feature that is not necessary for a connection to be categorized as a HQC. Biobehavioral synchrony describes the similar biological and behavioral processes that people have been shown to share in moments of connection (Fredrickson, 2013a). It includes synchronized body movements as well as neurological synchrony, which have been found to be linked to building rapport and understanding (Vacharkulksemsuk & Fredrickson, 2012; Stephens, Silbert, & Hasson, 2010). HQCs are not described as lacking biobehavioral synchrony; biobehavioral synchrony is just not a prerequisite or a part of the definition of a HQC.

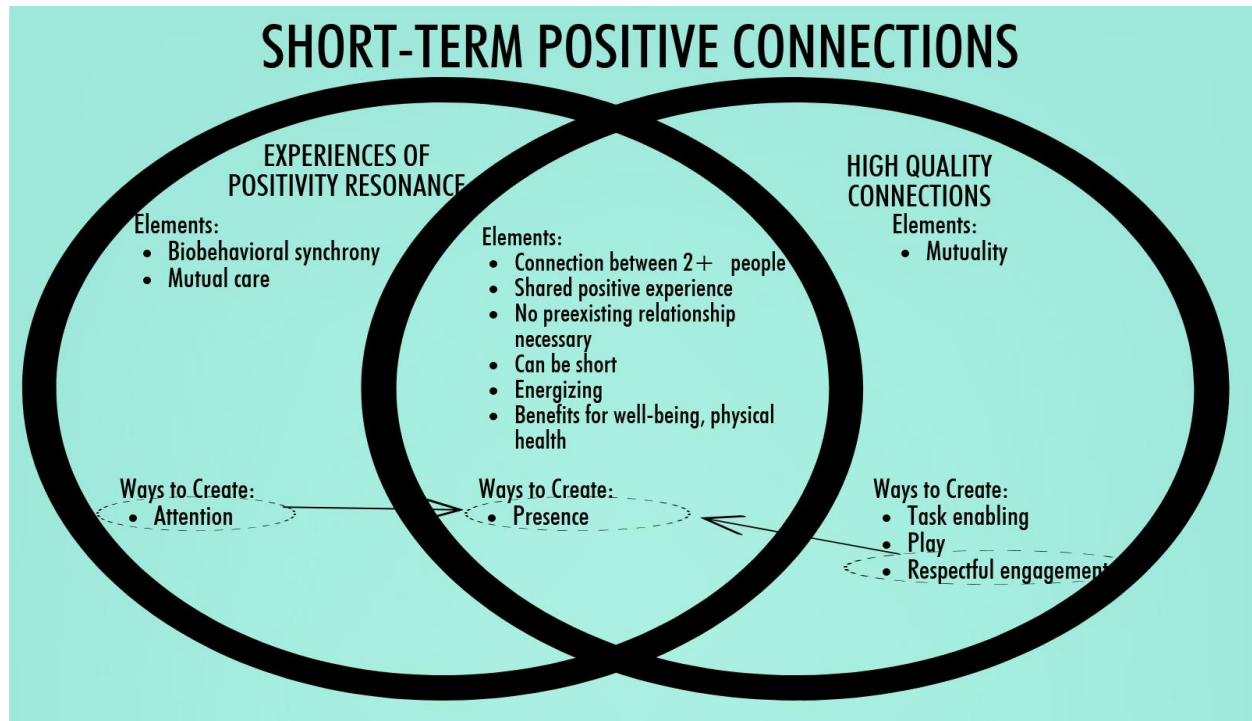


Figure 1: Adapted from Dutton (2003) and Fredrickson (2013a)

Though both HQCs and positivity resonance have elements of a mutual experience, they differ in the precise definition of what is mutually felt. The feeling of mutuality described in the experience of HQCs is specifically related to the definition of mutuality from psychologists Genero, Miller, Surrey, and Baldwin (1992): the exchange of thoughts, feelings, and activity between two people that goes both directions (Dutton, personal communication, June 27, 2019). They find that such mutuality facilitates the growth of relationships. Experiences of positivity resonance, conversely, have a shared sense of mutual care which is specifically about peoples' investment in one another's well-being.

**Benefits of STPCs.** STPCs can improve several aspects of well-being, including (1) workplace performance, (2) energy, (3) positive emotions, (4) physical health, (5) intellectual processing, and (6) organizational bonds.

STPCs are associated with increases in well-being overall as well. Positive connections are associated with an increase in subjective experiences (Blatt & Camden, 2007). Experiences

of positivity resonance build well-being by building rapport, bonding people, and increasing trust (Fredrickson, 2013a). HQCs affirm peoples' value and worth, and they help people build purpose (Dutton, 2014). Purpose is closely related to meaning, a building block of well-being as a piece of PERMA (Seligman, 2011).

Many of the elements detailed below are related to other building blocks of well-being. The associated increase in workplace performance that comes from HQCs can be tied to the "A" in PERMA: achievement. The resulting increase in energy or vitality can be tied to the "V" that Seligman (2018) notes could be part of PERMA. Finally, an increase in positive emotions relates to the "P" in PERMA: positive emotions (Seligman, 2011).

***Workplace performance.*** Connections that feel positive to both people have been shown to increase an individual's workplace performance (Blatt & Camden, 2007). In addition to an overall workplace performance increase, elements of STPCs are associated with other beneficial workplace boosts. STPCs have been shown to allow people to engage more fully with their work because they make people feel safe enough to express feelings, such as uncertainty, which can be necessary to feel fully connected to a task (Lewin & Regine, 2000). Another study finds that when people make HQCs, they feel like they have more time and concentration to devote to their work (Dutton, 2003). HQCs also make people more resourceful (Dutton, 2014).

Positive connections are specifically helpful in the workshop context because positive connections have been found to be the glue that holds temporary workers together in the absence of continuity within the workplace (Blatt & Camden, 2007). Though sometimes workshop participants know one another outside of the workshop, workshops are usually temporary situations. Therefore, positive connections can be particularly powerful in bonding workshop participants.



***Energy/vitality.*** Every interaction we experience can either increase or decrease our levels of energy (Dutton, 2003). Specifically, building and sustaining HQCs within organizations can both stimulate and reestablish energy, which Dutton (2003) defines as the state of being both eager to act and able to act. She explains that energy and a sense of vitality are renewable resources and HQCs are a great way to renew them. Similarly, Fredrickson (2013a) explains that experiences of positivity resonance also build energy. In the workshop setting in particular, STPCs can be strategically used to create, maintain, or renew energy, revitalizing such a short experience for its participants.

***Positive emotions.*** An increase in energy frequently comes alongside an increase in positive emotions, which have an effect of their own. Positive feelings activate what Fredrickson (2013b) calls an upward spiral, in which positive emotions and elements such as trust and openness feed off of one another and grow. An increase in positive emotions also activates what she calls the *broaden and build* cycle. This cycle, Fredrickson (2009) explains, illustrates how experiencing positive emotions broadens the cognitive scope allowing people to both take in more information on the periphery and explore more creative options. In addition to broadening the cognitive scope, experiencing positive emotions allows people to build psychological and physical resources (Fredrickson, 2013b). Overall, the broaden and build theory explains that positive emotions broaden people's outlooks so that they have more possibilities at their disposal and can more easily access a variety of thoughts and actions. Fredrickson (2013b) also notes that positive feelings expand the sense of self by dimming the boundary between the self and others. This is what causes people to want to help others after experiencing a positive moment. Workshop facilitators can thus use the suggestions listed in the appendices to create situations in which STPCs are likely to happen so that the facilitators can create opportunities to increase

positive emotions which could enact an upward spiral as well as allow participants to broaden their scope and build resources.

This is particularly powerful because happiness is contagious to up to three degrees of separation (Fowler & Christakis, 2009). The positive emotions and upward spiral could help people become happy, and people who are surrounded with happy people are more likely to be happy in the future. This places workshops in the position of being able to create and spread positive emotions and build positive resources to spread happiness past the boundaries of the workshop's walls.

***Physical health.*** Psychologists Emily Heaphy and Jane Dutton (2008) argue that short positive interactions have an important physiological impact. They compiled research that suggests that positive social interactions in the workplace correlate with positive effects on the cardiovascular, neuroendocrine, and immune systems. HQCs have even been found to provide physical benefits such as an improved immune system, lower blood pressure, and reduced stress (Dutton, 2003).

***Intellectual processing.*** Social interactions can also provide benefits for intellectual tasks. Two studies found that social interactions as short as ten minutes can increase processing speed and working memory performance for subjects in a variety of age groups when compared with intellectual warm-up tasks (Ybarra et al., 2008). One of these studies was correlational and one was experimental. This means that people can reap intellectual benefits from interactions which is particularly beneficial in the workshop context in which participants are frequently learning. Neither the beneficial outcome in processing speed nor working memory performance was specifically tied to positive interactions (Ybarra et al., 2008). This points to the benefits of social interactions, regardless of the positivity of the interactions. Though this Capstone is

directed at increasing the likelihood of belonging, mattering, and STPCs, this shows that even if the connections are not positive, they could still have an intellectual benefit for participants.

***Organizational benefits.*** HQCs increase people's ability to cooperate and coordinate within organizations (Dutton, 2003). They also enhance the bonds people have with a group and strengthen the commitment people have to their organizations. When there is a question to be answered, HQCs have been found to encourage people to have open conversations until they can get to the right answer which is helpful for group learning (Dutton, 2003). These benefits are particularly helpful in the workshop scenario because people are less familiar with one another than they would typically be in organizations, so cooperation and coordination may be harder to achieve than in a typical workplace.

***Psychological safety.*** HQCs of people who work in the same place are associated with higher levels of psychological safety and trust (Stephens et al., 2011). This association is particularly strong because of the benefits that come along with psychological safety itself for workshops in particular. Because of the beneficial power of psychological safety, more information about this benefit is highlighted below than that of any other benefit of either belong and mattering or STPCs.

***Definition of psychological safety.*** The way people feel in a situation affects the way they will choose to act (Khan, 1992). Psychological safety is the describes feeling like an environment or situation is safe enough to take interpersonal risks (Edmondson, 1999). A climate of psychological safety is one in which there are norms, practices, and procedures that are enacted either formally or informally that support trusting interactions (Baer & Frese, 2003). This is important because people care, both consciously and unconsciously, about the impressions that other people have of them, and those impressions dictate the willingness people have to take

risks that might compromise these impressions (Edmonson, 2008). This is particularly beneficial for workshops because risk-taking, as detailed below, is necessary for growth through learning.

*Benefits of psychological safety.* Psychological safety has several benefits, including (1) allowing people to live into their identities, (2) helping teams work better together, and (3) improving learning.

Psychological safety has been found to allow people to live into their identities. Social identity literature defines identification as the way people define and communicate the definition of themselves without fear which is similar to the definition of psychological safety. (Singh, Winkel, & Selvarian, 2013). Acting in accordance with one's perception of their true self is fundamental to identifying as an individual (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Psychological safety is therefore important to the expression of one's true self (Singh et al., 2013).

Workplace diversity is on the rise, and it is expected to continue to increase (Buttner, Lowe, & Billings-Harris, 2009). A rise in demographic diversity at work is associated with a rise in (1) workplace discrimination, (2) negative workplace attitudes, and (3) minority employees leaving their places of work (Avery & McKay, 2010). Accumulation of micro aggressions, a form of such discrimination, has a detrimental effect on mattering and well-being (Prilleltensky, 2016). Though workshops do not directly address workplace and employee retention, there is a heavy overlap between a workplace and the time in which people come together to accomplish a goal through a workshop. Therefore, these discouraging statistics about the workplace add an extra need for psychological safety during workshops.

In fact, a lack of psychological safety has been found to negatively affect racial minorities in the workplace more than their white counterparts (Singh et al., 2013). Further, climates that are supportive of diversity, or climates that support inclusion and equal

opportunities for all, have been found to be more powerful for Black employees than their white counterparts (McKay et al., 2007). This could be because identification by race is stronger for racial minorities than for white people, and racial minorities therefore react more strongly to discrimination in the workplace (Merritt, Ryan, Mack, Leeds, & Schmitt, 2010). This means that increasing psychological safety through building opportunities for connection can be seen as a small act of increasing social justice in the workshop setting.

In addition to allowing people to live into their identities, teams that work within a psychologically safe climate have a smoother time working with one another (Baer & Frese, 2003). Safety is the foundational building block of a group culture (Coyle, 2018). People who feel more psychologically safe have been found to be moderately more likely to exhibit *citizenship behaviors*, behaviors that are helpful to the group but are not included in formal occupational role descriptions (Frazier, Fainschmidt, Klinger, Pezeshkan, & Veselina, 2017). Though not all workshops require teamwork to create something new, most require people to interact or work together in some manner. Therefore, psychological safety is important to improving the experience of working together in workshops.

Psychological safety also aids in both learning and goal attainment. When people think the context they are working in is safe and that they can collaborate and get feedback, they share more information (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2011). This sharing of information is how learning and change happen within organizations (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Psychological safety increases team performance because it increases team learning (Huang, Chu, & Jiang, 2008). In addition to learning as an organization, individual learning is also positively correlated with psychological safety because it allows people to step away from their worries of being seen in a

negative light and gives them the freedom to relax and learn through questioning (Edmondson, 2008)

Psychological safety has been found to enhance the motivating effects of goals on behavior (Edmondson, 2008). Psychologically safe climates have been found to be correlated with goal achievement across large organizations as well as small teams (Baer & Frese, 2003). This means that the research applies on a wider scale than just a work team, so workshops should be able to take advantage of the goal attainment benefit of psychological safety, too.

Finally, psychological safety has been found to be strongly related to *prohibitive voice*, the expressions of elements that group members see that could be harmful to the group (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012). Expressing concerns is particularly helpful in workshops because knowledge of participant concerns could help facilitators adapt future programming. It also helps facilitators more easily spot risks of harm or inefficiency. I hypothesize that participants being more willing to express concerns could also increase the satisfaction of the workshop group because people may share concerns that someone else might also be feeling.

### **Application of the Research: A Guide to Fostering Connection in Workshops to Increase Well-Being**

Connection is an effective lever for well-being. The following research-based suggestions have been created to leverage the power of connection through workshops. These suggestions draw on many fields of research but primarily come from positive psychology and organizational behavior. Though the suggestions themselves have not been tested, they are based on research done in either a similar context or a context that can be extrapolated to apply. The goal is for workshop facilitators to use these suggestions to increase the probability of connection and the probability that their participants will flourish.

In Appendix A: Fostering Connection in Workshops to Increase Well-Being, you will first find a page of overall considerations to make when planning a workshop followed by suggestions to: (1) use norms of presence and respectful listening, (2) create opportunities for participants to help one another, (3) create structures for people to share information and gratitude, (4) collect additional information from participants and use it strategically to create belonging, and (5) make your work playful.

For facilitators who are not already employing the suggestions in Appendix A, this Capstone builds on their toolkit. For the facilitators who are already employing these practices, this research can support them in recognizing the research supporting their practice. This could increase their confidence as well as their ability to pass on knowledge to the participants so that they can be armed with both practices to use and their potential research-based positive effects. Many organizations do not yet prioritize connection, so these suggestions could also help those who are passionate about connection provide research-supported reasons that it should be prioritized in workshops as well as in the workplace overall. Though the suggestions are specific to a workshop context, they are extrapolated from research in both positive psychology and the workplace generally, so even those who are not specifically planning or facilitating workshops should also be able to derive value from this literature review and the suggestions stemming from it.

The suggested activities and approaches should be adapted to the specific contexts in which they are implemented. People interact within a variety of systems and conditions that affect the way they perceive and behave, and it is important to address the specific context of a particular event and group (Kasworm, Rose, & Ross-Gordon, 2010). These practical suggestions apply psychological theories and allow facilitators to experiment with new strategies within their

existing context. By layering their context and lived experience onto these suggestions and making them on their own, facilitators can continue to improve these research-based ideas.

### **Potential Ripple Effect**

Part of the potential of these suggestions is explaining their goals and predicted results to the participants so that they can use them outside of the workshop, creating a ripple effect of connection and well-being. Facilitators can explain their intentions as the activities happen, through a follow up after the activity, or by highlighting what has happened at the very end. It should not disrupt the flow of the workshop.

### **Context and Style**

It is imperative that the facilitator overlay their experiences as well as the context of the workshop onto these suggestions. Facilitators should find their own style and voice to ensure the suggestions feel authentic. Not everyone will be drawn to implement every suggestion. Facilitators should find the suggestions that work best for them, adapt them using their lived experience and knowledge of their group, and have fun employing the suggestions.

### **Feedback and Future Suggestions**

Feedback on these suggestions as well as recommendations for other facilitators can be delivered at [www.bit.ly/workshopconnection](http://www.bit.ly/workshopconnection). I intend for this document be interactive in the future so that the work will continue to incorporate the expertise and experience of workshop facilitators, and this is the first step in creating that interactivity.

### **Conclusion**

Social connection is a powerful tool for increasing well-being because opportunities to connect are all around us. Each interaction holds the potential for benefits to well-being, physical



health, and more. People frequently come together for short experiences to learn in workshops, and these workshops can be vehicles to realize the unrealized potential of connection.

To make a practical connection between the literature discussed above and workshops, Appendix A sets out several research-based suggestions that are designed to increase opportunities for people to connect and glean the benefits of social connection. Facilitators can put these suggestions into practice and increase the opportunities for their participants to flourish. They should overlay their experience and knowledge of the context of their workshop to best cater to the needs of their groups. As facilitators use the suggested tools in ways that align with their workshop, they can explain the strategies they used so that the participants also leave with tools to use in other situations to increase opportunities for connection and create opportunities to increase flourishing.

Opportunities to connect are all around us; we just need to take advantage of them. Using these suggestions, facilitators can transform workshops into vehicles for encouraging belonging and mattering as well as short-term positive connections that should increase the potential for participants to flourish.

## Appendix A: Fostering Connection in Workshops to Increase Well-Being

**How to Use This:** This document is not a comprehensive tool for planning workshops. There are many components of adult education that are not included here. This tool is specifically focused on creating connections. Facilitators can use it while they are brainstorming activities to include in a workshop or as a check after the activities for a workshop are already planned.

# Overall Options to Consider for Each Suggestion

There are a wide variety of ways experiences can be intentionally planned. Here are a few variables you can think about as you are planning your workshop. Each could apply to each of the suggestions in the following appendices, so they are listed here for simplicity.

## Interaction

### How will participants work with one another?

- Independently
- With a partner
- With a small group
- With the whole group

As you are thinking this through, consider the ways that participants will interact in other sections of the day. You will want to ensure variety throughout the overall experience. While connection will happen when people work with others, intentional independent work followed by a partner check in or whole group share can allow people to have the space to work on their own and also connect later. Remember that some people get energy from interacting with others and some people get energy from alone time.

## Modality

### How will people complete the task?

- Talking
- Writing
- Drawing
- Taking a video
- Other

Similarly to the interaction level of your participants, you will want to vary the types of work they are doing. It could also be helpful to give people a choice of modality.

## Physicality

### How will people be positioned?

- Seated
- Standing
- Their choice

You will also want to provide a variety of ways for people to use their bodies throughout the day. Think about what it feels like to be in one position for too long- are there ways you can give people a choice? What will your space need to look like to accommodate this? How will you ensure that your supplies support both seated and standing work? Be sure to keep in mind that different bodies have different levels of abilities, so always have an option for people to chose their positioning based on comfort and/or ability.

# Have norms around presence and respectful listening.

Creating norms for interacting as a group is a best practice for groups of people coming together (Justice & Jamieson, 2012). When creating norms, people consider many elements including listening, participation, and expectations ("Creating Norms," 2010). In order to encourage connection and thus attempt to increase well-being, facilitators can ensure the norms are anchored in presence and respectful listening. These norms should be created at the beginning of the experience and revisited throughout so that they feel familiar and useful (Justice & Jamieson, 2012).



## RESEARCH BASIS

Psychologist William Kahn (1992) describes psychological presence as being fully present so that one can bring their whole selves to a task. He states that being fully psychologically present allows people to connect in ways that bridge differences. Though psychological presence involves being attentive to oneself and others, it encompasses much more than what is necessary to bring about connection (Kahn, 1992). However, even small steps toward increasing psychological presence contribute to making High Quality Connections (HQCs) more likely to happen (Dutton, 2014). One of the key concepts that Psychologist Jane Dutton (2003) suggests building in order to make HQC more likely to happen is respectful engagement. She says conveying presence is the foundation of respectful engagement, and this can happen through avoiding both internal and external distractions (Dutton, 2003). Similar presence is necessary for positivity resonance as well. Psychologist Barbara Fredrickson (2013a) says real-time sensory connection is a prerequisite to positivity resonance. Her examples of such sensory connection are physical touch and sharing eye contact. Therefore, the following suggestions should increase the likelihood of short term positive connections.

These suggestions could lower the external distraction of technology which could increase the likelihood of connection based on research from Dutton (2003). Research from Fredrickson (2013a) states that sensory connection is a prerequisite to positivity resonance. I hypothesize that decreasing technology usage could increase peoples' chances to experience such real-time sensory connection.

Just the presence of one's cell phone can cause distraction. In fact, the mere presence of, not even use of, a smart phone has been found to lower available working memory capacity and functional fluid intelligence (Ward, Duke, Gneezy, & Bos, 2017).

### Norm of Low Tech

**Create a norm of low or no technology usage when appropriate. This should be at any and all points in which participants do not directly need technology to accomplish the goals of the workshop.**



Potential Risk

People may feel disconnected from their lives outside of the workshop.



Ideas to Mitigate

Provide intentional time for people to connect with their lives outside of the workshop. Ex: frequent breaks

Include that this will be a norm for the experience beforehand so that participants can ensure that those who count on them have other ways to meet their needs while they are less available to be reached.

### Paper Resources

**Create paper resources so that participants do not need a computer to follow along.**



Potential Risk

The workshop goals may not be able to be easily met without the use of computer technology.



Ideas to Mitigate

When possible, identify even small sections of time that could be completed without computers.



Potential Risk

This is not a sustainable choice for the environment.



Ideas to Mitigate

Ensure you are making sustainable choices in other ways. Ex: using reusable plates, mugs, and silverware.

Get creative with your supplies by using a projector and white boards that participants can use then re-use in lieu of paper.

**Create a norm for participants to leave the room when they need to take a call or send/receive texts.**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Autonomy signals to people in the workplace that they can be trusted which is associated with higher psychological safety. (Frazier, Fainshmidt, Klinger, Pezeshkan, & Veselina, 2017). This suggestion gives people the autonomy to handle situations as they arise, so it could also bring about psychological safety.



Potential Risk

If participants are not engaged, they may leave frequently.



Ideas to Mitigate

Structure the workshop in a way that is engaging. Ensure the content is meaningful to the participants.

**Norm of Leaving for Calls/Texts**

Have someone on hand to check in on participants who leave multiple times or for a long amount of time so that you can help them problem solve should they need to.

**Explore as a group what it looks like to feel present or show presence and surface from the group why that might be important.**

**Ensure these concepts are included: paraphrasing, summarizing, asking clarifying questions, touch (when appropriate), eye contact**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Listening effectively is an important part of the respectful engagement necessary for HQCs (Dutton, 2003). Humans have the capacity to take in up to 600 words per minute, but people don't speak much over 100 words per minute, so we are left with a gap in which our minds can wander (Messmer, 1998). Therefore, we need to intentionally listen and broadcast signs that we are listening. You can show that you're listening through paraphrasing, summarizing, and asking clarifying questions (Dutton, 2003). Real-time sensory connection is a pre-requisite for positivity resonance, and some examples are appropriate physical touch and eye contact (Fredrickson, 2013a)

**Explore Presence**

People can be primed to think about specific elements, and this priming is unconscious (Tulving & Schacter, 1990). I hypothesize that priming people to think about the benefits that come from being present and ways to be present will make them more likely to be present.



Potential Risk

Participants might not know examples of what it looks like to show presence.



Ideas to Mitigate

Have examples of what it looks like to show presence. For example: paraphrasing, summarizing, asking clarifying questions, using eye contact, etc.



Participants might not see why it is important to show presence.



Ideas to Mitigate

Have examples of why it is important to show presence prepared. For example: making connections, showing you value others. You can also explain Dutton's (2003) theory of respectful engagement as a pathway to connection.

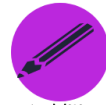
### **Provide time to practice the act of being respectfully engaged both in the moment of creating norms and as a refresher after a chunk of time.**

Practice  
Respectful  
Engagement



Potential Risk

It may not feel authentic to practice.



Ideas to Mitigate

You can name that it might not feel authentic in the moment to normalize people's feelings.

Lead the practice in a way that feels authentic to you so that it feels more authentic to the participants.

# Create opportunities for participants to help one another.

Even if the experience does not depend on people working together, facilitators can structure it in such a way that there are opportunities for helping which can help foster connection and well-being.



## RESEARCH BASIS

Task enabling is a term for doing things that help someone complete a task. According to Dutton (2003), task enabling fosters the quality of a connection. This could be giving information, resources, or other support. The task enabling should feel authentic. If it feels transactional, people are less likely to experience HQCs (Ames, Flynn, & Weber, 2004). Task enabling can build the recipient's sense of self-worth which leads them to want to build even more connections thus starting a cycle of creating and deepening connections (Dutton, 2003). This situation also has the potential to increase positive emotions, creating an upward spiral as well as a broadening of the perspective and building of resources (Fredrickson, 2013b).

**When defining roles for people within a group, ensure everyone has a role to play in helping someone else**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Interdependence has a strong effect in the workplace. When employees rely on each other to complete their jobs, psychological safety is more likely to happen (Frazier et al., 2017). This should also help participants have role clarity which helps people know what they are expected to do and can grant them more psychological safety (Frazier et al., 2017).

Assign  
Helping  
Roles



Potential Risk

This could slow down the pace of work being done



Ideas to Mitigate

Ensure the tasks make sense to belong to different people; make sure you are not doing this for the sake of doing it.



Potential Risk

Peoples' skills could be misaligned with their roles.



Ideas to Mitigate

Give people the time to switch roles to what feels best for them.

Ensure the roles do not require specific skillsets. Or if they do, allow people to sign up for them ahead of time.



### Partner Feedback

**After participants have created something, have them split into pairs in order to give and receive feedback.**



Potential Risk

People may not know the types of feedback to give that would be most helpful.



Ideas to Mitigate

Give participants a rubric or list of criteria to look for and/or examples of feedback that they could give.

### Normalize Receiving Help

**As the facilitator, set an example of when you needed help in a similar context. Also, ask for help yourself during the workshop.**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Participants see an example of how to ask for help from someone in power which could help them feel more comfortable asking for help. Leaders acknowledging their fallibility also relates to the creation of psychological safety (Edmondson, 2008).



Potential Risk

You may not need help with anything as the facilitator.



Ideas to Mitigate

Intentionally plan to execute an element you cannot do or need more expertise to do.

Getting other peoples' feedback is always helpful- publicly asking for feedback on something is a form of receiving help.

### Give/Get Activity

**Complete a give/get activity. This can look many ways. The goal is for participants to explain the things they need help with, see what other participants need help with, and indicate where their strengths or abilities overlap with what another participant needs.**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

This allows people to help one another which should enable connection through task enabling (Dutton, 2003). It also allows people to use their strengths which can help people buffer against and manage problems, improve relationships, and enhance well-being (Niemic, 2018). Using four or more strengths has been associated with having a more positive working experience and being more likely to experience work as a calling (Harzer & Ruch, 2012). Use of character strengths is also connected with job performance as well as coping with stress, (Harzer & Ruch, 2014; Harzer & Ruch, 2015).





Potential Risk

Not everyone will have an aligned skill or strength with something someone else needs.



Ideas to Mitigate

Encourage people to only sign up for one until everyone has something they can share or help with.

Do this activity virtually beforehand- perhaps through surveys or an online module so that you can ensure everyone is matched up and it does not take time away from the workshop. This could also allow people to connect others with someone else outside of the workshop who has a sought after skill.

**Use the jigsaw method in which you divide participants into groups in order to digest information so that they can then present it to the whole group (Aaronson, 2004).**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Using this method should create interdependence and improve both performance and relationships. Cooperative learning activities in which people depend on one another for information have been shown to improve students' school performance and their relationships (Aaronson, 2004).

This also brings in the potential benefits of interdependence on psychological safety previously mentioned (Frazier et al., 2017).



Potential Risk

This suggestion is based off of a study done by psychologist Elliot Aaronson (2004) with children in schools, so it may not be relevant.



Ideas to Mitigate

Though effects on relationships and performance haven't been directly measured, the jigsaw method is a suggested practice for adults, so I would hypothesize that its effects will still be powerful, if not the exact same.

Jigsaw  
Method

# Create structures for people to share information and gratitude

Though sharing happens naturally for some, creating structures for it can ensure it happens for more people and that it is done intentionally.



## RESEARCH BASIS

Shared knowledge is conducive for the development of psychological safety (Carmelli & Gittell, 2009). It is also powerful for facilitating group and organizational learning (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Sharing gratitude has also been shown to have positive results. Expressing gratitude affirms the other person's value which is an important piece of mattering (Prilleltensky, 2016; Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). When someone is thanked, they see an increase in their feelings of social worth which motivates them to do more good (Grant & Gino, 2010). In fact, people have been shown to not only start other unrelated prosocial tasks but also persist at these tasks for longer after receiving gratitude.

## Time and Place for Sharing

**Create a time and place for people to share information that they learn. One way of doing this could be a reporting structure at the end of each work session in which people share what they learned with a partner, a small group, or the whole group.**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Norms can facilitate shared knowledge (Carmelli & Gittel 2009). Learning itself takes place in interpersonal interactions (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Sharing knowledge has been found to be conducive for developing psychological safety. Therefore, providing a norm of information sharing could be beneficial for both psychological safety and learning.



Potential Risk

If someone feels like they are not learning, having to share something they learned may be difficult.



Ideas to Mitigate

Ensure that what people share could be about anything that is learned. It would be most aligned if people shared about something they learned within the context of the workshop, but if they feel like that is not possible for them, they can share something else they've been thinking about because of the context of the workshop.

**Have people introduce themselves through a positive introduction. They should tell about a time when they were at their best with a beginning, middle, and positive end that details when they handled a tough situation in a positive way (Rashid & Seligman, 2018).**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

When bringing in new people to an organization or group, their retention and performance can be enhanced if they are encouraged to express their personal identities and best selves rather than take in information about the organization (Cable, Gino, & Staats, 2013). Asking new members to focus on themselves more than the new group they are joining is a cue of belonging because it shows that they matter and creates a baseline of psychological safety (Coyle, 2018).



Potential Risk

Talking about ourselves at our best can bring up emotions that require vulnerability to share. People will have a range of comfort levels with this.



Ideas to Mitigate

Do this in small groups or pairs to take some pressure off.

Give people the option to read what they have prepared or to let others read what they have prepared so that they feel less like they are presenting something.

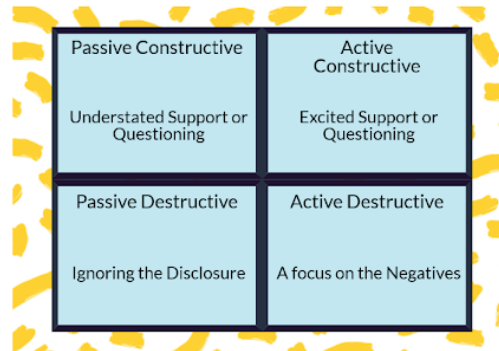
## Positive Introduction

**Give a framework for *active constructive responding*. This is a way to respond to people that can encourage well-being.**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

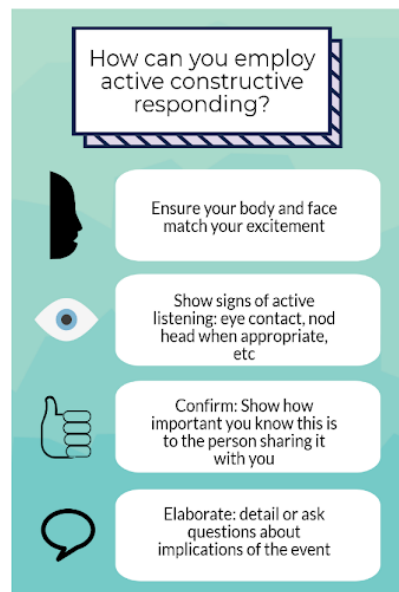
Researchers Gable, Gonzaga, and Strachman (2006) have a theory that there are two dimensions to responding when someone shares information: active  $\leftrightarrow$  passive and constructive  $\leftrightarrow$  destructive. This creates four types of responses detailed in the image below.



Adapted from Gable, S. L., Gonzaga, G. C., & Strachman, A. (2006)

Active constructive responses (ACR) are associated with greater relationship satisfaction, trust, and intimacy while passive constructive responses are negatively associated with each of these (Gable & Gosnell, 2011). This can also be a virtuous cycle because subjective well-being can cause stronger relationships (DeNeve, Diener, Tay, & Xuereb, 2013).

Active  
Constructive  
Responding



Adapted from Gable, S. L., Gonzaga, G. C., & Strachman, A. (2006)



Potential Risk  
People may be resistant to learning about or practicing ACR.



Ideas to Mitigate

Ensure you explain the value this can have for relationships and for well-being. Note that it can be helpful outside of the context of the workshop in any interaction.

## Capitalizing

**Create intentional opportunities to capitalize on good news or happenings. When participants finish a key piece of their work, you can take a moment to facilitate participants sharing good news with one another.**



### ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

People experience positive events three times as much as negative, and people share good news with others 70-80% of the time (Gable & Gosnell, 2011; Gable & Haidt, 2005). We can harness this frequency of positive experiences during workshops by providing space for sharing good news or what is called *capitalizing* (Langston, 1994). Sharing positive news with others has been found to increase the positive affect people experience beyond what it would have been without sharing (Langston, 1994; Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004).



Potential Risk

If the positive events are not happening at the same time as the time planned for capitalizing, participants may lose out on the peak capitalization opportunity.



Ideas to Mitigate

Teach the concept and ask people to practice capitalizing during an intentional time. They will likely have something to celebrate, even if it isn't their biggest win of the day. Then, encourage people to capitalize amongst themselves later on when it feels most appropriate.

**Have participant feedback be valued as much as any coach, expert, or facilitator. One way to do this is to have participants be in groups and give them equal time to give feedback on what each other are working on as the "experts" in the room.**



### ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Computer scientist Alex Pentland (2008) found that teams perform better when everyone in the group talks for an equal amount of time and for relatively short amounts. Additionally, when teams communicate with one another, not just the person with authority, teams perform at a higher level.



Potential Risk

People are conditioned to value experts' feedback. They may want more time with someone in power than their peers.



Ideas to Mitigate

Name this tension and give the reasoning why this is happening. Note that spending time thinking about someone else's work could also give them the space to think about their work differently as well.

## Elevate Participant Feedback

**Provide groups with a chance to have side conversations. Strategically encourage group talking through pausing for conversation and conferral.**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Computer Scientist Alex Pentland (2008) found that teams perform better when they have their own side or back channel conversations.

Chance for  
Side  
Conversations



Potential Risk

People may not want to break their focus to have side conversations.



Ideas to Mitigate

Ensure this is done at a natural breaking point. For example, it could be right before a break- you could give a question people can consider on their way out of the room.

**Plan regular times to share gratitude between individuals or in front of the group.**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Publicly expressing gratitude for value someone else has provided or affirmation of their contributions can foster HQCs (Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2011).

Psychologists Avery and McKay (2010) suggest that management of diverse individuals is most effective when everyone is welcomed and encouraged to participate in processes as well as recognized for contributions made. I would hypothesize that intentionally creating space for sharing gratitude for contributions of participants could make people feel more welcome and encouraged to participate.

Time for  
Gratitude



Potential Risk

People have a variety of comfort levels with both sharing and receiving gratitude.



Ideas to Mitigate

Having the option to share through writing, in partners, or with the whole group allows people the choice of how they want to express their gratitude. Make paper available so that people can write one another thank you cards and/or a poster on the wall so that people can publicly thank someone without having to share.



## Ensure Reflection Time

**Ensure there is time for reflection built into the workshop. This could be between exercises, right before meals, at the end of each day, etc.**



### ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Purposeful reflection has been shown to increase learning (Edmondson, 2008). Therefore, building in time to reflect on what has been learned could help concretize the experience.



Potential Risk

People like to reflect in different ways.



Ideas to Mitigate

Give participants the option to reflect how they would like to.

This could include written, aloud, through pictures, through finding an object and defining how it represents them, etc. They can also have a choice of working independently, with a partner, with a group, etc.

## Feedback Structure

**Use a variation of the following feedback structure: Affirm the work that has been done, assert the high standards that need to be met in this situation, reaffirm that you believe this person can meet these standards, and ensure they have the resources they need to improve.**



### ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Identity plays a role in feelings of belonging in learning situations like workshops. Minority students have been shown to have lower trust in and feel less belonging at school, but one feedback structure has been shown to halt the lowering trust and increase the quality of work (Yeager et al., 2013). The feedback described here mirrors the feedback from this study which showed the students that the teacher had high standards that they thought the student could meet, and it was accompanied by resources that the student needed to get there. Though this suggestion comes from a study specifically done with white teachers and students of color, I would imagine it would also be effective at sustaining trust with adults of other identities.



Potential Risk

Some workshops are not conducive to this type of feedback because work has not been presented to the facilitator.



Ideas to Mitigate

If it does not feel relevant, do not use it. However, if there are any situations in which it could be useful, try it out! This could be feedback on something completed in an application for the workshop or feedback on an article completed following the workshop.

**Intentionally create space and time to celebrate mistakes and what was learned from them.**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Legitimizing mistakes indicates the environment is safe for interpersonal risk taking which fosters psychological safety (Pearsall & Ellis, 2011). Facilitators could do this in a way that also encourages connection through having people do this publicly to the whole group, with a smaller group, or with a partner.

### Celebrate Mistakes



Potential Risk

People will have a range of comfort levels with admitting mistakes.



Ideas to Mitigate

That is ok. Name that this is probably the case, and encourage people to share mistakes as well as what they learned from them- big or small, in accordance to their comfort level. You can also create a space for written reflection in participant materials where participants can independently reflect on mistakes and what they learned from them.



# Collect additional information and use it strategically to increase belonging

Ask participants seemingly trivial questions in a pre-survey so that you can connect people through commonalities like favorite color, birthday, birth month, astrological sign, city they're from, favorite animal, dog breed, or something similar.



## RESEARCH BASIS

Incidental similarities of small details like favorite books or movies, birthdays, and travel destinations have been shown to increase compliance, cooperation, and social connection (Walton, Cohen, Cwir, & Spencer, 2012). This sense of social connection is associated with shared psychological and physiological responses. Even when group membership is manipulated based on an arbitrary label, belonging has been found to register in the brain (Packer & Van Bevel, 2015). Research on connection in schools has found that students who feel socially connected to their classmates and teachers exhibit more motivation in school even months and years after the measurement is taken (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Collectively, this research suggests that there are small interventions that could make a powerful impact in terms of feeling connected as well as motivated.

**Color code commonalities or write the commonalities themselves onto stickers or nametags to start conversations/connections as soon as participants walk into the room**



## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Mere belonging research by Walton et al. (2012) illustrates the power of knowledge of small commonalities. People have been shown to share physical and psychological responses once being shown their commonalities.

These suggestions also encourage this knowledge of shared interests and information without much facilitation so that people may feel more belonging and may be able to get started with their work sooner having a shared connection.

Include  
Similarities  
on  
Nametags



Potential Risk

Some people may not want their information shared as freely as others.



Ideas to Mitigate

Indicate how the information will be used in the survey sent ahead of time so that people can opt out of questions they do not feel as comfortable sharing.

**Put people into groups based on their commonalities**

Grouping



Potential Risk

People could become distracted by the element(s) they have in common.



Ideas to Mitigate

Give time in the beginning of group work for people to talk off topic then start everyone at once so that they have time to discuss these elements and it does not bleed into work time as much.

**Have people try to guess what their commonalities are as a get-to-know-you activity.**

Guessing  
Game



Potential Risk

People may be resistant to such a social activity.



Ideas to Mitigate

Encourage people to talk in smaller groups if larger groups feel less comfortable to them.

# Make your work playful

There are a variety of ways to inject humor and play into work done at workshops.



## RESEARCH BASIS

Play lets people learn about one another in ways that would not happen over the course of a normal work day. This reduces stress and breaks normal routines, enabling connection at work (Dutton, 2003; Lilius, Worline, Dutton, Kanov, & Maitlis, 2011; Stephens et al., 2011). Play encourages people to live within different rules than normal which can make them less self-conscious and more comfortable taking interpersonal risks (Stephens et al., 2011). Playfulness can encourage people to open up more which facilitates HQCs (Stephens et al., 2011). Facilitators can intentionally frame the activities they are already doing in playful ways. The way activities are performed is more important than the type of activity when it comes to playfulness (West, Hoff, & Carlsson, 2016).

The suggestions in this section are the application of research on play generally as well as play cues. West et al. (2016) find that having play cues out during work time implies the permission that people feel they need in order to play through temporarily changing the rules. Their research shows that having play cues available during breaks from work significantly increases the creative climate, playfulness, and productivity. I would hypothesize that this would also apply to infusing play into other areas of the day like theming sections or creatively breaking people into groups. Dividing people into groups in a silly manner is a good way to introduce play. Placing people in groups could also increase satisfaction because people get satisfaction from their collective identities (Haidt, Seder, & Kesebir, 2008). Play has been found to build collaboration, promote creativity, and increase intrinsic motivation as well as open up so that HQC are more likely to happen (Dutton, 2003).

### Create Playlists

**Before the workshop, ask participants for their favorite song to listen to that pumps them up or puts them in a fun mood. You can create a playlist of these songs to be played when you want to set a playful tone. You could also ask them for a song they like to listen to when they work independently. Ensure you ask that all songs are the “clean” version so that they are appropriate.**



Potential Risk

Some people may work to music that distracts others.



Ideas to Mitigate

Ensure music is played at low enough of a volume that it feels less distracting.

### Display Playful Stimuli

**Have playful stimuli available throughout the experience. This could be sodas, snacks, candy, play-dough, pipe cleaners, cards, small games like tic tac toe, stickers, etc.**



Potential Risk

Participants could be distracted from the work they need to do.



Ideas to Mitigate

Allow participants time to explore the playful stimuli.

Have the most potentially distracting stimuli only during breaks.

### Use Themes

**Theme the sections of your workshop. For example, an introduction to a new project or new information could be a “pre-game huddle” theme where you play snippets of music that would be played at live sports games, include images of athletes, have participants “huddle” in small groups, etc. Other fun potential themes are camping, super heroes, local celebrities or activists, circus, safari, a popular movie or play, particular colors, or foods.**



Potential Risk

A theme may seem too far from the purpose of the work to some participants.



Ideas to Mitigate

Source potential theme ideas from the participants.

Ensure the theme is supplementing the work rather than detracting

## Creative Grouping

**Be creative when breaking people into groups. If the amount of people who are in different groups does not matter, you could name groups after different categories like celebrities or movies and have people walk towards their favorite. If you plan an extra 10 minutes, you could have people play rock paper scissors to decide what groups they will be in.**



Potential Risk People may not see the benefits of the addition of playfulness.



Ideas to Mitigate

Include the research benefits so that those who appreciate knowing the reasoning can appreciate the scientific lens.



Potential Risk People may gravitate to a few groups over others.



Ideas to Mitigate

If you need an even amount of people in each group, limit the amount of chairs at each table so that you can ensure the group numbers stay the same.

## Find Your Playfulness Style

**Find your style of playfulness in information dissemination. This could be through humor in your delivery, incorporating GIFS into a powerpoint deck, creative metaphors, intentional use of color, etc. This is the clearest example of framing activities rather than changing the activities themselves.**



Potential Risk If none of these suggestions feel authentic to you, this may not go over well with the participants.



Ideas to Mitigate

It's important that you find a style authentic to you. If being playful or humorous doesn't come naturally to you, are there other people on your team for which they are a strength? How might you involve them? Could they help you create questions to ask in the moment or to be included on a handout?

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